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The Featherwood God

R. H. TANEYHILL

Samuel Treat Armstrong M.D., Ph.D.
The Leatherwood God

AN ACCOUNT OF THE

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APPEARANCE AND PRETENSIONS

OF

JOSEPH C. DYLKES

In Eastern Ohio in 1828

BY

R. H. TANEYHILL

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THE main facts of this narrative were published some years ago, by Mr. Taneyhill, in a series of articles in the Barnesville (Ohio) *Enterprise*, under the *nom de plume* of "R. King Bennett." The various statements have since been verified, and the narrative enlarged by the evidence of other witnesses. The delusion of which it treats was so extraordinary in its nature, and produced, in so short a time, so great and permanent a change in the religious belief of so many intelligent persons, that the publishers thought it worthy of preservation, as a curious episode in the religious history of the Ohio Valley, in their "Ohio Valley Historical Miscellanies," issued in 1870. There has been, all these years, a constant inquiry for it, which of late has become so pressing that the publishers are induced to print a small edition of it in separate form.

The Leatherwood God.

RELIGIOUS impostors have flourished in almost every portion of the historic period. Nor is this remarkable, when we reflect that man, universally, is disposed to give credence to marvelous stories, to put faith in sanctimonious pretensions, and to refer whatever he does not understand to some supernatural agency. These religious cheats have always found ready subjects to impress with their views, however visionary, and to mold into material to promote their ulterior schemes and purposes, however absurd and wicked.

Such an impostor was JOSEPH C. DYLKES, whose advent, teachings, journeyings, and unhallowed pretensions are truthfully rehearsed in the following pages, and form one of the most interesting and curious episodes in the history of the Ohio Valley.

REGION WHERE HE APPEARED.

The settlement at Salesville, Guernsey county, Ohio, was begun in the year 1806. The settlers

composing it were principally from the States of Pennsylvania and Virginia, with occasionally an immigrant family, who had ventured from the old world to fight the battle of life in the new.

The lands within the limits of the settlements were very rich, well watered, and heavily timbered. Through them flowed the Leatherwood creek, skirted by wide bottoms. Its clear, bright waters, sparkling amid copses and woods, fell sufficiently at various points to afford water-power for mills, while numerous tributary streams coming down from the hills, laved the banks of narrow, fertile valleys, and gave ample supplies of good water for man and beast. Springs were abundant, and the scenery at many points was picturesque and romantic. A region possessing such a variety of advantageous conditions was well calculated to attract to it, as this did, a class of settlers averaging above those of the majority of settlements in the Valley of the Ohio, in intelligence, morality, and educational advancement. Prominent among the early settlers here were the Brills, Frames, Williamses, and Pulleys, the numerous descendants of whom have contributed so much to make that neighborhood one of the most enlightened and refined in our great and beautiful State.

The settlers at Salesville were subjected, how-

ever, to the hardships common to the pioneers of the West. A wilderness had to be subdued, great forests had to be felled, and untamed nature to be reclaimed into fields and meadows. Houses had to be built, out-buildings to be constructed, and the infinite appliances of our civilization to be brought about them; all of which required time, and the exertion of much physical and mental labor. The settlers, therefore, had but little leisure to devote to the embellishment and charities of life.

STATE OF RELIGION IN THE SETTLEMENT.

At the pioneer settlements of the West, the families at any given point were generally of one religious creed, being drawn together by the reciprocal attraction of a common sentiment.

Salesville, however, was an exception. The settlers here were of diverse religious views; some were Methodists, some United Brethren, while others represented many of the sects of the day. Nearly all were men of deep religious convictions, to whom the worship of the Most High was a necessity. Hence, as early as 1816, all united in a common effort, and put up a commodious, hewed log church, about the fourth of a mile north of the Leatherwood creek, on the hill overlooking the present village of Salesville. As it was the prop-

erty of no sect, it was called by common consent the *Temple*.

At this house of worship, for many years, the settlers met regularly to offer up their devotions. But as ministers came among them only at long intervals to deliver religious instruction, that work fell generally upon some of themselves, and it was done with a will and force that caused the *Temple* and its worshipers to be a power in the land, widespread and influential.

Time wore away, during which the other settlements of Eastern Ohio erected church-houses, and the Methodist and United Brethren churches established circuits and appointed preachers to administer to the spiritual wants of the people; the *Temple* still remaining a common shelter for the worship of all sects, demonstrating that often spoken, but seldom-practiced, expression, "How pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity."

The ecclesiastical polity of the United Brethren church is very similar to that of the Episcopal Methodists. They hold general, annual, and quarterly conferences; have bishops, presiding elders, itinerant ministers, and local preachers. For ministerial administration they divide the country into diocese, districts, and circuits, the presiding elders and trav-

eling preachers being supplied by the annual conferences.

LEATHERWOOD CIRCUIT.

At the time of which I am about to write, the Salesville congregation of United Brethren and the *Temple* were included in what was called the Leatherwood circuit, which then extended from the Conauton creek, Tuscarawas county, to Marietta, and from the Muskingum to the Ohio river. It was called a circuit, although there was but little of the circle about it, as the appointments lay almost in a straight line from Conauton to Marietta. There were eight or ten preaching places south of the *Temple*, and as many more north of it. The Annual Conference of 1828 met in March, and appointed Rev. John Crum presiding elder of the district embracing the Leatherwood circuit, and the Revs. Sewell Briggs and Abner Martin, as the itinerant ministers for the circuit itself. To be as near the center of his field of labor as possible, Mr. Briggs located his family with the *Temple* congregation, while his coadjutor resided at the north end of the circuit.

This conference year began with bright prospects for the United Brethren of the *Temple* neighborhood. Concord prevailed among the membership, zeal inspired their hearts, and a godly sorrow

for sinners determined them to exalt Zion and to extend and establish her borders. The reverend gentlemen appointed to minister to their spiritual wants were deeply imbued with the spirit of the Gospel, and were ardent to confirm the brethren and sow the good seed that should “spring up to eternal life.”

So in harmony and peace, in labors many, but with reward abundant, the *Temple* congregation moved on in their religious work through the spring and summer of that year, until the month of August was reached, when their Destroyer came—a destroyer that broke the unity of the church, seized their *Temple*, and supplanted the faith of their fathers by the most audacious and blasphemous errors, that ever found support in the infatuation of enlightened men.

ADVENT OF THE LEATHERWOOD GOD.

About the middle of August, a camp-meeting was held on the lands of one Casper Overley, two and a half miles north-west of the *Temple*, in the immediate vicinity of the M. E. Chapel, called Miller’s meeting-house, under the auspices of the United Brethren church. The camp-meeting began on a Wednesday, and was to continue over Sunday. On Sunday the attendance was very large, the in-

gathering being from over twenty miles around. The Rev. John Crum, P. E., addressed the congregation at the afternoon service. He had proceeded about half way in his discourse, and by his eloquent appeals had obtained the profound attention of the audience, and had wrought their feelings up to their intensest pitch ; a silence solemn as the quietude of the grave pervaded the congregation, when a tremendous voice shouted " Salvation ! " followed instantly by a strange sound, likened by all who heard it to the snort of a frightened horse. The minister was taken by surprise and stopped preaching, all eyes were turned to the spot whence the sound seemed to proceed, and were fixed on a stranger of odd appearance, seated about midway the congregation. He sat steadfastly in his seat, with a countenance of marked solemnity, and totally unmoved by the excitement which he had produced. That stranger was JOSEPH C. DYLKS, the noted "*Leatherwood God*." The shout and snort of Dylks are described by every one who heard them as imparting to all within their sound both awe and fear. One who had heard them often said : " They carried with them, right through you, a thrill like that felt when greatly scared in the dark, and a dread similar to that experienced when we think of dying instantly." Their effects upon

the congregation at the camp-meeting were singular indeed. Some of the men jumped to their feet, others bounced in their seats, women shrieked aloud, and every cheek blanched. It was several minutes before the minister could proceed with his sermon ; but the people gave no further heed to it, they were too much absorbed in scrutinizing the mysterious stranger.

The strangest circumstance, however, connected with his advent is, that no one saw him come into the congregation, nor had any one there ever seen him before. The most searching inquiries were made, but no witness ever appeared to verify the manner of his coming. He was there, but that is all we will ever know about it.

HIS PERSONAL CONDUCT.

The dress and personal appearance of Dylks were such as to heighten the astonishment of the people concerning him. He was about five feet eight inches high, straight as an arrow, a little heavy about the shoulders, but tapered symmetrically to the feet. His eyes black, large and flashing ; nose, slightly Roman ; forehead, low and broad ; hair, jet-black, long, and glossy, thrown back from the forehead over the ears, and hung in a mass over the shoulders, reaching nearly to the

middle of the back. His face was fair, but pale, and was pervaded by a look of deep solemnity, tinged with melancholy. He was dressed in a black broad-cloth suit, frock coat, white cravat, and wore a yellow beaver hat. He appeared to be between forty-five and fifty years of age. When we reflect that this was the day of linsey-wool hats, hunting shirts, and wamuses; that there was not in that large multitude one broad-cloth coat, and not a male person whose hair was not cut close, and who had not a rustic, pioneer look, we see, at once, how these considerations complicate the question, how he got into the congregation unnoticed.

SUBSEQUENT CONDUCT.

When the congregation was dismissed, of course, many sought the acquaintance of Dylks. He maintained a solemn gravity, but was affable and pleasant in his manner to all who approached him. He was invited home for supper by Mr. Pulley, at whose house he sojourned for several days. Dylks attended the night services, and, at the time most opportune for making the greatest impression on the people, again gave his shout and snort.

An advent so strange and mystical—so like the coming of a spirit—was well calculated to excite the credulity of the people, and to form a ready

and sure basis for the pretense that he was endowed with supernatural powers. He immediately availed himself of the vantage ground given him over the minds of the community, and began secretly to declare himself to be a celestial being, bearing in his person a heavenly mission. Dylks was very sociable, and took great delight in visiting from house to house. He was every-where received with hospitality and kindness, and, when he bade adieu to a family, was always requested to repeat his visit. This afforded him fine opportunities to carry forward his plans. For several weeks following his advent, however, he made no public promulgation of his pretensions, but attended the various religious meetings of the neighborhood, conforming his conduct to the occasion, and fervently uniting in the services. Sometimes he led at the meetings, at which times he informed his hearers that he was only a teacher, and not a preacher even. His manner of giving public instruction was peculiar. He used only one hymn, that beginning :

“Plunged in a gulf of dark despair,
We wretched sinners lay.”

This he would line off a verse at a time, then expound it, then sing it, and so on with each verse until the hymn was finished. His prayers were

pointed, sententious, and short—rarely occupying over two or three minutes, and always ending with the Lord's prayer. His expositions of scripture were clear, terse, and spirited; his illustrations familiar but pungent. He seemed to be a master of the Bible, unhesitatingly and correctly quoting any portion of it necessary for the illustration of his subject. This was Dylks to the public. In secret, he was impressing certain members of the community with a knowledge of his tremendous spiritual powers. Telling them that he came into the congregation at the camp-meeting in his spiritual body, then took a corporeal one, and clothed it as they saw him there; that he could disappear and reappear at pleasure, perform miracles, and finally that he was the true Messiah come to set up the millennium, and establish a kingdom that should never end; that he should never die, and that all who should believe on him should live forever in their natural bodies and hold the earth as an everlasting heritage; that his kingdom would spread over the whole earth, and nothing but holiness dwell therein; that his body could be touched only by his permission; that not one hair of his head could be taken from him. And that with one shout and one snort he could strike out the universe.

PROMINENT CONVERTS.

Conspicuous among the number led astray by the secret teachings of Dylks were Michael Brill, Robert McCormick, and John Brill. As they played a leading part in the Dylks' imposture, I will give them each a brief notice.

MICHAEL BRILL was the earliest settler at Salesville. He was born in Loudon county, Virginia, in the year 1763, and was consequently in his sixty-fifth year at the advent of Dylks. Mr. Brill had been a prominent member of the United Brethren church for many years, and his acknowledged piety gave him a wide influence in the neighborhood. He was well off, owning a farm of one hundred and sixty acres, about a mile northwest of the *Temple*. His family consisted, at the time, of several daughters and one son—quite a boy. John Brill and George Brill, senior, who will be spoken of hereafter, were his younger brothers.

ROBERT MCCORMICK was born in Ireland, and came to the Salesville settlement in the year 1820, as a school teacher, which profession he followed in winter for many years. He was a member and local preacher in the United Brethren church. His farm adjoined that of his father-in-law, John Brill. At this time, Mr. McCormick was probably

forty years of age, and in the full bloom of great intellectual and physical powers. He had a fine education, and was versed in the ways of men. Standing high in the church, of strict integrity, having an unblemished character, popular with the people, his personal appearance and manners pleasing and attractive, united to an intellectual force unusual in such a community, and a will-power unyielding and vigilant, Robert McCormick was a personage well-fitted for a leader, and, as such, became the champion apostle of the Dylks' imposture.

JOHN BRILL was also an early settler at Salesville, and at the advent of Dylks was about fifty years of age. He was also born in Loudon county, Virginia. Although he does not occupy a leading position in the Dylks' delusion, yet such were his relations to certain prominent characters in it, that this narrative would be incomplete without giving him a special notice. He was a member of the Methodist Episcopal church, and was a class-leader when Dylks made his appearance; which station he held uninterruptedly for over twenty years. He was the owner of a large farm, possessed much other means, and was eminently popular and influential. McCormick and James Foreacre, who will perform an important part in the career of

Dylks, were his sons-in-law—Foreacre living at the time on Mr. Brills' farm.

PROGRESS OF THE DELUSION.

We have said that Dylks had, up to this time, carefully guarded from the public, as far as he could, what he had been teaching in secret. But by some means unknown, it had been reported that he had said he should never die. This report reached the ears of George Brill, Sr., at whose house Dylks had made frequent visits. So when he came again, Brill said to him: "I hear that you say you shall never die." Dylks very dexterously slipped out of the difficulty. He raised his hands, exclaiming: "This shell will fall off,"—then looking at Mr. Brill, continued—"I can endure strong meat, but must be fed on milk for a time." The sagacious answer led Mr. Brill to infer that the report had started from a too liberal conclusion predicated on the language of Dylks.

It was now about three weeks since Dylks had made his *debut* at the camp-meeting, and during this time he had made many proselytes to his claims, including many devout and influential professors of Christianity. His plans were now fully ready for the public promulgation of his pretensions, and events favored him. It was now Rev. Briggs' time

to go to the appointments south of the *Temple* and preach, but he was suddenly taken ill, and it became necessary to obtain some other person to fill his place. Mr. McCormick was at last prevailed upon to make the tour in the place of the sick brother. He consented with the understanding that Dylks would go with him as his coadjutor. This Dylks agreed to do, and all things were made ready for them to start from the *Temple* on the next Wednesday morning.

The first three appointments south of the *Temple* were Seneca, which was near where Mt. Ephraim now stands, in Noble county, Ohio. The next was at the dwelling-house of a brother named John Christhaven, some miles further south; and the third, at the dwelling-house of another brother named Mason, who lived in the southwest corner of Monroe county. This brother, Mason, had a son named David, who was an invalid, and confined to the house by consumption. David was about twenty-five years old, and had been for a year or two a licensed local preacher in the United Brethren church.

Wednesday morning came, and McCormick and Dylks set forward from the *Temple* to administer to the congregations at the several appointments south of the *Temple*.

THE JOURNEY AND ADVENTURES OF DYLKES AND
McCORMICK.

The following account of this clerical tour was placed in my hands by a gentleman whose father received the statements embodied in it from McCormick himself, which he reduced to writing at the time. The writer was one of Dylkes' disciples, and placed implicit faith in what was told him by Mr. McCormick. Coming as it does from a genuine believer, who stood high in the Dylkes' Brotherhood, through an honorable source, I do not hesitate to pronounce it official. I give it entire, only changing a few words and giving it a few grammatical corrections :

“ We had scarcely crossed the Leatherwood, when I seemed lifted up into a heavenly atmosphere. I felt extremely pleasant, indeed, full of joy. The face of Dylkes grew brighter and lovelier ; and his voice was exceedingly melodious. When we arrived at the top of the hill overlooking the *Temple* from the south, Dylkes turned his horse's head, stretched out his hands toward it, and exclaimed :

“ ‘ Oh ! how ignorant is that people of my true nature. But time will reveal all things to them.’ We then went on, occasionally stopping to pray and to give thanks to God, arriving at Seneca in

due time. At this appointment, we discharged our religious duties to the apparent acceptance of the congregation. But we did not go to bed until late, consuming the time in prayer, singing praises to God, and reading his word. Started early the next morning; when we had gone but a short distance a bright light circled the head of Dylks, who continued wrapt in thought for some time. When we stopped to pray, as we had done the day before, this light remained over the saddle until Dylks would remount. So we continued to travel until we were about half way, when he heaved a deep sigh and said: 'This work must be done.'

"We dismounted and prayed. This we did several times before we reached Christhaven's, the next appointment. Dylks officiated there in a very satisfactory manner. That night we did not go to bed at all, but sat up praying and reading the scriptures. From the moment we left this appointment, the face of Dylks got lovelier and his voice sweeter. About noon we dismounted to pray. His countenance then appeared as if he were in an agony of mind. Up to this time whenever I was in Dylks' company, my feelings were very agreeable, but now I was oppressed. The day had been very clear—not a cloud to be seen—and the sun shone bright and hot. But as soon as we remounted, a chilli-

ness, that almost made my teeth chatter, seized my body, and continued until Dylks ordered a halt. Looking me steadfastly in the face for a minute or two, he said: 'Time is most precious now. We must stop praying. Now is the time for work. I now reveal unto you, that you are *Paul, the apostle*. You will shortly see most wonderful things. I will increase your faith so that you may see the sights of my power with understanding, and by them magnify my glory among men.' As soon as Dylks begun speaking the chilliness left me, and I felt more joyful than ever I felt before. Here Dylks cast his eyes skyward, and remained motionless a few minutes. The bright light of day suddenly became as mere twilight, then it as rapidly grew light as ever again, when Dylks exclaimed: 'Did you not hear that sound—like the rushing storm. It was the Adversary of souls cleaving the air. I saw him sweep with hell-lit wings the top of yonder woods, and dart to earth to give me battle. Fear not, I will vanquish him.'

"We started on, and shortly descending into a ravine, thickly wooded, with steep hills on both sides of the road, when we saw the devil standing in our way. Dylks dismounted for the conflict, and exclaimed in a loud voice: 'Fear not, Paul; this done, my work is done.' With a firm and de-

liberate step, Dylks marched on to the combat. Satan did not flee, but prepared to meet him. He poised himself on his cloven feet in firmest attitude for mortal stroke; half lifted his flaming wings; bristled his scaly folds with sounds like muttering thunders; shot out his forked tongue, each prong streaming with liquid fires; rolled his glaring eyes, which seethed in their sockets; while a hissing noise, terrible as the screams of the damned, bubbled in the throat of his majesty infernal.

“Dylks knelt and prayed, arose, shouted salvation, and blew his breath toward the enemy of mankind. The devil’s wings dropped, his scaly folds recoiled, his tongue was motionless, and his eyes, appalled, stood still, and with leaps terrific, which shook the earth at each rebound, he fled the field. We followed with all the haste we could, keeping close upon him, until we came in sight of brother Mason’s house, when the devil jumped the fence and sprang to the door. The door did not open, but the devil disappeared from us.

“When we entered the house, which we did without hitching our horses, we found brother Mason in, and his son, Rev. David Mason, lying on a bed. He got up from the bed as soon as we entered, and embraced Dylks as his Savior, remarking that the devil had taken possession of him, and

that he knew Dylks as soon as he came in as his deliverer. Dylks then said: 'Let us pray.' We knelt, and Dylks prayed. When we arose from prayer, the house was filled with a strange, bright light, and every face shone with a luster beautiful to see. Dylks then walked around brother David Mason three times, rubbing his hand against his body all the time, and saying: 'I bind the devil for a thousand years, not to be loosed to meddle in the affairs of men.' Having done this, he embraced David seven times, hugging him with much feeling, and then exclaimed: 'The perfect work is done.' Dylks then sat down. After we had eaten and rested ourselves well, I proposed to have our horses unsaddled, but Dylks said: 'No, we must return to the *Temple*. Preaching now is vain, useless—useless. There is now no salvation only by me.' I had no power in me to resist any thing required of me by Dylks from that time on, so we bade the Masons good-bye and started home, where we arrived; how, you all know. Dylks talked but little on our journey home, but continued to mutter to himself: 'The perfect work is done.' Dylks never shouted salvation after his return, but simply snorted."

THE EFFECTS.

The unexpected return of Dylks and McCormick, their marvelous story, and the public enunciation, now for the first time made by Dylks, that he was the true Messiah, come to set up a kingdom on earth, struck the community with amazement. This was intensified into the profoundest astonishment, when it became known that such men as McCormick, and Michael and John Brill, with others equal in repute to them, and fully one-half of the old worshipers at the *Temple*, were believers in the doctrines of Dylks and firm adherents to his cause.

The delusion spread with a rapidity scarcely ever equaled in the history of religious fanaticism. Family was set against family, parent against child, husband against wife, neighbor against neighbor, and so the imposture progressed, dividing and conquering, until the whole church membership of the community were overwhelmed by it, except George Brill, Sr., and James Foreacre. They stood firm and unfaltering, the one a Methodist and the other a United Brethren, the only remaining pillars to sustain the old edifice of Christianity in that neighborhood. Around them the non-professors gathered to stem and beat back the wasting desolations

of the Dylks' delusion. The Rev. Briggs was still sick, and had to be an unwilling and helpless witness of the disruption of his church. His flock had wandered from the fold, and were gathered around a shepherd, who promised to lead them at once into the New Jerusalem, and that, too, without encountering the King of Terrors.

THE TEMPLE SEIZED.

As nearly all the church members of every denomination had gone over to Dylks, they seized the *Temple* on the Sunday night following the return of Dylks and McCormick, and dedicated it to the use of the new dispensation. Dylks preached the dedication sermon. The brethren and sisters assembled in a body, and many others congregated, prompted by curiosity. At first, he was cautious in his language, but gradually grew bold, and at last gave utterance to the following blasphemous language: "I am God, and there is none else. I am God and the Christ united. In me, Father, Son, and the Holy Ghost are met. There is now no salvation for men except by faith in me. All who put their trust in me shall never taste death, but shall be translated into the New Jerusalem, which I am about to bring down from Heaven." The brothers yelled: "We shall never die." The

sisters screamed, Dylks snorted, and the spectators muttered indignant exclamations. The dedication ceremonies were converted into an uproarious religious tumult. Men shouted and yelled, women screamed and uttered prayers to Dylks to have mercy upon them, while he stormed and snorted. As Dylks descended from the pulpit, McCormick exclaimed: "Behold our God!" and the believers fell on their knees and worshiped him. When partial order was restored, McCormick announced that the next meeting would be held that night a week, and the congregation was dismissed.

The violent demonstrations of the Dylksites on Sunday night disgusted some who were wavering, and drove them back to the ancient landmarks, while they increased and confirmed the indignation and hatred of the non-professors. The lofty pretensions of the avowed God were soon put to the test. "We must have a miracle—some evidence of his stupendous powers must be produced—simple declamations will not do," were expressions everywhere resounding in the ears of Dylks' disciples. He saw the necessity of some act to confirm his claims, and promised to make a seamless garment, if the cloth was furnished him.

A MIRACLE THAT WAS NOT PERFORMED.

Among the number carried away by the delusion was Mrs. Pulley, wife of him at whose house Dylks took his first supper in the neighborhood, as already mentioned. She was a very excellent and devout woman, and a prudent wife. She had just got home from the weaver's a piece of cloth intended for the winter clothing of the family. This piece of goods, as her husband was an unbeliever, she secretly conveyed to Michael Brill's, at whose house the miracle was to be wrought. The people assembled at the appointed time, eager and anxious to see the sight. Friends were certain of its performance, enemies equally sure of a failure. Dylks delayed his coming. Anxiety began to take possession of the believers, and mirth to fill the hearts of the "heathen doubters." Much they looked, and long they waited, but Dylks came not. Nor did the linsey cloth burst into seamless vestment under the magic touch of the miraculous artificer, but remained undisturbed in woof and roll. And so ended the effort at miracle.

Sunday night came, and a large congregation assembled at the *Temple*. The following account of that meeting was communicated to me by Rev. George Brill, then, and now, a resident of the

Salesville community. He is a son of George Brill, Sr., heretofore mentioned, and a nephew of Michael and John Brill. Mr. Brill was an eye-witness of the facts he narrates, and to him I am indebted for considerable other information about the Dylks' delusion :

REV. GEO. BRILL'S ACCOUNT OF PROCEEDINGS.

“ The *Temple* was crowded. McCormick, who officiated on the occasion, stood, as was the custom of local preachers, in front of the pulpit. Dylks sat directly before him. During his remarks, McCormick alluded to Dylks as the ‘ Lion of the tribe of Judah,’ and called him God. Dylks then sprang to his feet, and leaped into the air three times, giving vent to his peculiar snorting. He then cried out with a loud voice : ‘ I am God, and besides me there is no Savior.’ This he did several times during the evening. McCormick continued, ‘ The day of salvation is past, the wicked shall be cut off, and we, the righteous, shall reign with Dylks a thousand years, with nothing to mar our peace or our happiness.’ During the evening I saw several women go and fall down on their knees before Dylks and worship him. At the conclusion of the meeting, McCormick announced a meeting for the next Thursday evening, saying : ‘ When the old

man, as you call him (meaning Dylks), will speak to the people.'

"Dylks now staid most of his time (continued Mr. Brill) at my uncle's, Michael Brill, who, with his family, were all firm believers in his pretensions, and so was my brother Christopher, who lived with his uncle Michael. Christopher once came over to my father's, and, with tears in his eyes, tried to persuade father and mother to believe on Dylks. Father told him it was all a delusion, but he left weeping, saying: 'Your damnation will be sealed.'

"During the time to Thursday night, many opinions were expressed about Dylks, and the excitement was intense. Some said he was crazy, others that he was after money, a few that McCormick put him up to it, but a large majority thought him to be what he said he was.

"Before we went to the *Temple* on Thursday night, McCormick came to our house. Father was considerably aggravated at the shape matters had taken, and was in no humor to hear any of the folly of McCormick. He had not been there long, before he began talking about the 'new faith,' and remarked to father: 'I shall never see corruption, as I shall never die;' and then said: 'Uncle George, you can not shoot me.' Father sprang for his rifle, which hung on pegs in another room, and would

have shot McCormick in the legs, if he had not begged off, saying: 'I was only in fun, uncle.' There were a good many of Dylks' believers there, on the way to the *Temple*, and it was quite a damper on their ardor to see McCormick act that way.

"The crowd at the *Temple* that night was great. We could see them coming from every point of the compass. Before we got to the house, McCormick said: 'Dylks will not be out to-night, but I will fill his place;' as much as to say, I am God! Some person had started, for fun I suppose, a report that he would be mobbed that night if he came out. The *Temple* was crowded full, and nearly all eager to see the *Mighty God* enter the church, but he did not come.

"Rev. Biggs went early, and set down in the pulpit with his head bowed down, so as to hide himself from the congregation. Of the vast crowd only one or two knew he was there. McCormick took his seat in front of the pulpit. All seemed to be anxious to see what would come next, and a perfect silence prevailed in the crowded house, when the Rev. Briggs arose to his feet, as if he had been a specter, looked for a full minute over the congregation, and said: 'This is all a *fal lal lal*.' A scene followed that beggars description. The disciples of Dylks sprang to their feet, and with one

voice, as it were, cried out: 'He is my God;' and then left for Michael Brill's, where Dylks was, shouting as they went: 'He is my God.' But a mere remnant was left, as the followers of Dylks principally made up the crowd."

A REVEREND CONVERT.

The fame of Dylks had, by this time, spread throughout the Leatherwood circuit, and had reached the ears of the clergy in other fields of labor. Curiosity to see the pretender was excited in many of the preachers, and one of them yielded to the temptation. His name was Samuel Davis, a young man of fine talents, and who had just been put into the itinerancy of the United Brethren church, in the north part of the State. So he set out to see for himself this man who had put himself in the place of God. At Wooster, Ohio, he fell in with a young fellow-preacher, named Jacob Brill, son of George Brill, Sr., who was in charge of the Wooster circuit. Brill was about to come home on a visit when Rev. Davis arrived at Wooster. So they started for the Salesville neighborhood together. Late one afternoon they arrived at the house of one Heaps, a preaching station in the Leatherwood circuit, near Antrim, Guernsey county. Before they entered the house Brill heard

that Dylks was there. He therefore cautioned Rev. Davis against him. Davis replied: "Bro. Brill, you need not give yourself any fears about that matter." They were introduced to Dylks. After supper Brill asked Davis: "What do you think of him by this time?" "Think of him! He's nothing but a crazy old man," was Davis' reply. "Beware, or he'll have you, sir." "Never," rejoined Davis.

During the conversations of the evening, Davis seemed to give but little heed to what Dylks said, and treated him with studied indifference. The next morning, however, when Brill proposed that they start on their journey, Davis said: "No, I shall not go now. I shall remain until Dylks goes." Brill, finding Davis had determined to stay, went on by himself. In a few days Dylks and Davis arrived in company at the Salesville neighborhood, stopping at Mr. McCormick's. In a short time thereafter, Davis announced himself a believer in the teachings of Dylks.

ARRESTED BY A MOB.

Dylks' star, which had rushed to the zenith so rapidly, now began to wane. Enemies commenced to organize an opposition, and friends, when they saw that his lofty pretensions when put to the test,

were only empty boastings, began to doubt. Having their plans perfected for the arrest of Dylks, they lost no time in putting them into execution, Mr. Brill's communication contains quite a graphic narration of the doings of the mob which arrested Dylks and carried him before the magistrates; and I transcribe it in full. Mr. Brill says:

“ William Gifford, who lived in the neighborhood, had a daughter named Mary, a pretty and smart girl, about seventeen years of age. She was a believer in Dylks, and would listen to nothing her father and friends could say to her. She spent most of her time going around with the disciples wherever Dylks was. Gifford was a kind father, very fond of his daughter, and much distressed at her conduct; he entreated her with all his power to leave the delusion. She finally told him: ‘ If you will get me a single strand of his hair, father, I will renounce my belief in him as God.’ Dylks had made them believe that this could not be done. Gifford resolved to have that lock of hair.

“ James Foreacre, son-in-law of John Brill and brother-in-law of McCormick, was deeply mortified at their course, as he was a member of John Brill's class, and he determined to see if Dylks could not be frightened from the place, hoping by this to save Brill and McCormick.

“ So, on a Thursday night, some weeks after the affair at the *Temple*, Dylks and some of the ‘ little flock ’ assembled at McCormick’s. Dylks always called his disciples ‘ the little flock,’ quoting that passage which reads: ‘ Fear not, little flock, it is your father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.’ James Foreacre heard of the meeting, and got his brother John to go with him to McCormick’s to help arrest Dylks.

“ The same evening William Gifford attended meeting at Miller’s Chapel, and there organized a company of four or five to go with him on the same errand that Foreacre and his party were about to endeavor to perform. But neither knew of the other’s intentions. The Foreacres arrived at McCormick’s first, went in, and tried to get at Dylks, but were driven out by the ‘ little flock.’ John Foreacre then cut a club and said: ‘ I’ll have Dylks or die in the attempt.’ The Gifford party had now arrived, and as the Foreacres entered the house at the south door, they entered at the north. The ‘ little flock ’ was taken by surprise. My brother Christopher was of the ‘ little flock,’ and he took a three-legged stool and got ready to throw it at them, when he thought: ‘ Why should I fight for God Almighty,’ so he put the stool down and left, and gave up his would-be God.

“ By this time, Dylks had slipped into the kitchen and hid himself in a corner by the chimney. Gifford sought him out, seized him by the hair of the head, and dragged him out of the house, and continued to drag him out through the yard. He tore out a considerable lock of Dylks’ hair as a trophy to carry home to his daughter Mary. They had Dylks, but they did not know what to do with him. He made no resistance. Some one proposed to hang him, when Dylks trembled mightily. Another said, let’s thresh him, and let him go. Finally, they concluded to take him before ’Squire James Frame, and see what the Civil Code provided for such fellows.”

As Mr. Brill’s account is silent as to what took place at ’Squire Frame’s, I give it as I heard it from one who was an eye-witness.

BEFORE ’SQUIRE FRAME.

James Frame, the justice before whom Dylks was taken, was a son of Thomas Frame, one of the first settlers in that community, and a Methodist. The ’Squire was a man of good sense, and well versed in the statutes of the State. When the party reached the office with Dylks, they were soon informed by his honor that he had no law by which to try a “ God.” Thomas Frame, the father,

was present in the room. After the justice had refused to take cognizance of the case, the old man stood a few minutes in silence, surveying the strange-looking personage before him, and then inquired: "Do you pretend, sir, to be God Almighty?" "I am God, and there is none else," replied Dylks. The old man remained silent several seconds, then extending both hands toward Dylks, very solemnly said: "May the Lord have mercy on your poor soul." Dylks smiled and remarked: "The old man will believe by and by." Had Dylks remained silent, he would have been spared further trouble; but his wicked answer made the mob more furious than ever. So they bore him away to confront 'Squire Omstot, of Washington, Guernsey county, Ohio. This dignitary's office was located about where the Ark store-house now stands in that village.

IN COURT AGAIN.

Arriving here bright and early in the morning, they awoke the public functionary from his slumbers to sit in judgment on the conduct of a pretended God. The morning was frosty, and the party chilled; but the 'Squire soon had his office aglow with warming flames, and they were ready for business. The specifications, charges, and

statements of the accusers were duly presented. And now there came looming up new questions, grave and solemn, such as had never before been broached in the jurisprudence of his little court. Something must be done, but what should that something be? The 'Squire, having in finished style rubbed his "specks," and put them on his nose, took down the book containing the "be it enacted" of the General Assembly. With stunning look, he conned its pages, scanned the sections defining crimes; but, unsatisfied, turned his eyes, beaming with fresh-born hope, to the constitutional provision guaranteeing religious freedom; closed the book, and replaced it on the shelf; took off his "specks" and rubbed them again; threw a forlorn and despairing glance at the crowd, as if imploring pity for his miserable predicament, and subsided into a reverie, more perplexed and worse confounded than he had been before his reading. The suspense was terrible. How we are sometimes lifted unexpectedly to ourselves from the mire and clay of ignorance to the firm, broad highway of knowledge by the helping hand of some professional or literary friend. So it was with the 'Squire. A Cambridge lawyer happened to be in town, and after consultation with him, the 'Squire, with eyes blazing with wisdom, and a mein bridled and reined

with the starchy grace of judicial dignity, reseated himself. A 'Squire was of some consequence in those days. The crowd stood tiptoe, bending their bodies and shooting out their necks to catch the first sound of the magisterial thunder. The 'Squire spoke: "In this country every man has a right to worship what God he pleases, and that under his own vine and fig tree, none daring to molest or make him afraid. With religious fanaticism our laws have nothing to do, unless it be pushed so far as to violate some of our public ordinances. This I find the prisoner has not done; he must therefore go acquitted."

While the 'Squire was hunting the law, consulting the lawyer, and pronouncing his decision, Dylks conducted himself with fortitude and humility. When the opinion of his Honor had been given, and before the crowd began to breathe easy, after the mighty strain on their attention, the friends of Dylks, apprehensive of violence from the Foreacre party, gave him a wink. He sprang to the street and bounded up the pike, followed by his shouting accusers, who hurled at him a shower of the recently broken stone that strewn the road. Dylks escaped untouched, and was lost by his pursuers in a woods which skirted the pike at the east end of the village.

REIGN OF TERROR.

The Foreacre party, though foiled in the legal prosecution, had gained a victory by putting the pretended God to flight, and so returned in triumph to Leatherwood. Being now in the ascendant, if not by numbers, yet certainly by the war spirit, they brought the community under surveillance to their power. The neighborhood was regularly and vigilantly patrolled; the houses of the "believers" put under strict watch, and the entire region round about the *Temple*, sleeplessly scoured by the scouts. Many were the insults offered by them to the "faithful." Menace and threats were indulged in so freely that the leaders of the Dylks party desisted from all public demonstrations, and quietly awaited the subsidence of the mob spirit. Miss Gifford, having been put in possession of the lock of hair, torn by her father from the head of Dylks, had lost faith in the truthfulness of his Godship. A few others deserted the faith, and it appeared evident to the opposition that they had exploded the delusion. Dylks not appearing, the believers remaining quiet, and the indignation of the chief promoters of the persecution having expended itself, the community settled to its previous placid condition.

WHAT THE DYLSITES WERE DOING.

Although the "believers," during the reign of terror, had abandoned their public meetings and instructions, they were, nevertheless, sedulously spreading the faith in secret. But no sooner had persecution ceased, and active opposition ended, than they renewed their public worship under the lead of McCormick.

Their number had not been in the least depleted by the persecution, although a few had gone back to the "herd of the lost," yet new converts had been made sufficient to compensate for those who had gone astray. Besides, the persecution had the same effect upon the deluded that it always has had when directed against religious fanaticism; it only intensified their faith and strengthened their feelings of brotherhood. Their public services were held sometimes at Michael Brill's, sometimes at John Brill's, and at other times at the *Temple*.

WHAT HAD BECOME OF DYLS.

Dylks, who had disappeared on the run, had not yet made his appearance, and what had become of him was unknown to the "lost," as all were so denominated who rejected the teachings of the impostor. Many were the stories invented, both by

his friends and his foes, about what had become of him. Some said he had been taken by the angels up to heaven ; others that he was wandering about the neighborhood of the *Temple*. Occasionally, strange lights were seen, and queer noises heard, by some night traveler, and these were said to be produced by the collision of Dylks' spiritual essence with some Plutonian emissary come to torment the faithful, but driven away by the timely interference of their Lord and Master. Another story, much circulated at the time, represented that Dylks was seen in the western part of Pennsylvania, near Washington, with his face to the East, and walking very fast. The facts, however, are that after he escaped from his accusers at Washington, he made his way back to the Salesville neighborhood. That while the terrors and vigilance of the opposition lasted, he remained secreted in the woods or out-houses, or at the obscure residence of some believer little noted, having his wants supplied by his disciples. On several occasions he narrowly escaped detection and consequent violence by the indiscretion of his friends, who, when conveying him food, so acted as to excite the suspicion of the opposition.

AN ESCAPE.

At one time during the fury of the Foreacre

party, the retreat of Dylks was ferreted out by three of them who were hunting him. They all had a plain sight of him, but he escaped in a manner unknown and mysterious. From certain actions of his disciples, it was suspected that he was hid in a thicket on the lands of one William St. Clair, who lived about a mile west of the *Temple*. Mr. St. Clair was one of his proselytes, and had, on several occasions, aided Dylks in eluding the pursuit of his enemies. The thicket was about midway between Michael Brill's and St. Clair's, and, as both of these gentlemen were his warm friends, of course their houses and farms came in for a large share of the attention of the infidel mobocrats. The thicket was surrounded entirely by deep, stagnant waters, except a narrow bench of land that formed a place of exit, but which could be readily watched by a single person. The three who were on the hunt of him entered the thicket on this narrow strip of land, and near the center of the area inclosed by the waters found Dylks sitting on a log. Fearing he might escape them, and to be certain of their game, they returned to the narrowest point of the passway through which they had entered the thicket, and posted two of their number as guards, while the third was dispatched to inform their comrades. In a short time, eight or ten others arrived

at the point occupied by the guards. Leaving four of their number to watch the passage, the remainder marched into the circle formed by the guards and water, but after searching the grounds with all the care of men in earnest, leaving no place in which a human being could be secreted unexamined, they found no Dylks. He had vanished from their grasp.

DYLKS REAPPEARS.

Dylks was naturally a coward. For several weeks he had endured the horrors of great fear, and suffered an isolation as painful as an imprisonment. Nor did he permit himself to be seen by any but the faithful for a week or two after the opposition had disbanded their organization, and ceased to pay any attention to the disciples of the new faith. Fearing no longer for his personal safety, he made his appearance at a public meeting of the "believers" at Michael Brill's. He here exhibited great trepidation, watching every new comer with looks of suspicion, and keeping himself in constant trim for flight. He soon grew bold, however, and again began to visit through the neighborhood, extending them for several miles around the *Temple*.

FRESH DEVELOPMENTS AND AN ORGANIZATION.

For weeks following the reappearance of Dylks, divers meetings were held, and visitations from house to house carried on, the "brethren" strengthened, the wavering confirmed, and proselytes made and added to their numbers. Novelty, mystery, and miracle constitute the vital principles of every "new faith." And it is indispensable, also, that some of these be constantly active in the production of fresh developments to meet the emergencies of opposition, and to prevent the lukewarmness of the membership. Besides, members are nothing without an organization to bring them into order, to give adhesion to the individual parts, and to secure the permanency of the whole.

Dylks could not *do* the miraculous, but he could make promises stupendously novel, and could envelope his actions with an atmosphere of mystery. As an organizer, he was a mere bungler.

But the time had now come when fresh developments must be made, and an organization perfected. So, to accomplish these purposes, a meeting of the "faithful" was held on a Sunday night, toward the close of October, 1828, at the house of Michael Brill. Rev. Davis, McCormick, John Brill, and many of the disciples were there assembled.

Dylks announced to the brethren, that although the kingdom he was about to set up was to be on the earth, yet it was not of this world—was to be one of peace, harmony, and brotherly love. That as they had been met by violence, denunciation, and persecution, thereby subjecting them to much suffering for the faith, and that if he persisted in his work at that point, it was probable other outrages would be practiced upon them, and that as he did not wish to use force to carry forward the good work and establish the great city, he had determined not to bring down the New Jerusalem in that neighborhood, but had fixed on the city of Philadelphia as the point for its foundation. He also informed them that the time had fully come for the beginning of that work, to do which he must have his assistants, whom he called his apostles. He then revealed to the membership the persons who were to be his apostles: Rev. Davis was to be the “Peter” of the Dylks’ dispensation, and Michael Brill the “Silas,” and that it would be necessary for them and McCormick, who was the “Paul,” to go with him to Philadelphia, to assist in the establishment of the great city, which was to be the city of all cities, and was to fill the earth with its magnificence and glory. That, during their absence, the “little flock” was to be tended by John Brill, who was to

see that they met together once in each week for prayers and instruction. That, when they prayed, the believers should keep their faces to the East, and he would not fail to remember them. That, having erected the New Jerusalem, and made all things ready, he and his apostles would return, gather up the faithful, and transplant them in the midst of the great city.

Dylks, at the same meeting, presented his believers with a description of his New Jerusalem: "Its light would eclipse the splendor of the sun. The temples thereof, and the residences of the faithful, would be built of diamonds excelling the twinkling beauty of the stars. Its walls were to be of solid gold, and its gates silver. The streets were to be covered with green velvet, richer in luster and fabric than mortal eye ever beheld. The gardens thereof were to be filled with all manner of fruits, precious to the sight, and pleasant to the taste. That the faithful would ride in chariots of crimson, drawn by jet black horses that needed no drivers, and that their joys would go on increasing forever. That the air of the city would be redolent with the aroma of shrub and flower, while ten thousand different instruments, attuned to the symphony of heaven, would fill the courts, streets, temples, residences, and gardens with music ineffably sweet,

swelling the souls of the saved with perpetual delight."

He informed his apostles that they must set out on their journey early the next morning. The question was then sprung as to money to bear the expenses of the trip, when Dylks remarked: "As for money, these," pulling three old rusty coppers from his pocket, "will be sufficient; for of them I can make millions of gold and silver."

THE JOURNEY TO PHILADELPHIA.

By times in the morning, those three devoted disciples of Dylks and apostles of his dispensation, Rev. Davis, McCormick, and Michael Brill, with their lord and master, started afoot from McCormick's for the city of Philadelphia.

They pursued their journey, sometimes by the highways, sometimes by the by-ways; at other times striking through fields and plunging across forests, scaling mountains without regard to roads, but always coming precisely to the ferries and bridges that afforded passage of the rivers and streams which lay in their way. How they managed to obtain food and lodging remains a secret to this moment. Dylks, however, so acted as to procure both. When they arrived to within about three miles of the city, the road they were pursu-

ing forked. Dylks now said: "Faithful apostles, it is now necessary for us to separate for a time. Paul and Silas will take the south fork of this road, I and Peter will pursue the north. We meet again where the light from heaven shall shine brightest within the city, for there will the New Jerusalem begin to expand to fill the earth." They parted. McCormick and Brill went on, and in due time arrived at the city, but saw no light. They journeyed the city over, but saw no light. Day after day they traveled the city, street by street, trembling between hope and fear, but still found no light. The light never came, nor did Dylks or Davis. Having remained until the last vestige of hope vanished, with sorrowings and weepings, foot-sore and moneyless, they set their faces toward Baltimore, where they arrived in due time. Here, from the pledge of their tobacco crop, which was still in the hands of a commission merchant, they procured funds and went home by stage. They made a truthful report of the events of their journey, suppressing nothing. The effects of Dylks' trickery upon the brotherhood was scarcely perceptible. They had become too deeply imbued with the bewildering influence of the delusion to yield it up, no matter what the defeat to their expectations might be, or how dastardly soever Dylks should act. Illustrat-

ing that declaration of holy writ, that man may be so far led away by delusion that he will believe a lie to his own damnation.

DYLKS' SUCCESSIVE CLAIMS.

I have spent much time to gather together from the statements of both friends and foes of Dylks, his claims and pretensions, and the order in which he promulged them, with the arguments advanced to sustain them. In so doing, I have carefully compared the testimony, and have adduced from the evidence thus afforded me the following summary :

When Dylks first made his appearance in the neighborhood of the *Temple*, he claimed to be only an "humble teacher" of Christianity. Shortly, however, he pretended to be the Christ of Calvary, returned to resurrect the saints, and to set up the millennium. While he was enforcing upon the believers this pretension, he would often exhibit what he said were the nail marks in his hands, the spear mark in his side, and the thorn marks on his brow. Having established this claim firmly in the minds of his disciples, he began to teach that although Jesus Christ was a real Messiah, had been crucified, and had arisen from the dead, yet that he was not *that* perfect Messiah and Christ, vouchsafed to

man by the promise that : “ The seed of the woman should bruise the serpent’s head,” in that “ Shiloh” that was to “ come,” and in that Holy One that was not “ to see corruption.” He contended that that “ seed,” that “ Shiloh,” and that “ Holy One,” according to these promises, should never taste death. So death should have no dominion over him (Dylks). That if one died, so long as he was dead, so long death held dominion over him. He said that death, therefore, as a matter of fact, had had dominion over Jesus Christ—had had a real triumph over him. That the physical sciences demonstrated that a dead body at the time of year in which the crucifixion occurred, and in the latitude of Jerusalem, and dead, too, for thirty-six hours, would necessarily within that time commence to decompose, especially where the skin should be broken. That in the mere article of death there is corruption.

That *the* perfect Messiah and Savior should never taste death, but should be as immortal and immutable as the Father. And that he, Joseph C. Dylks, was that perfect Messiah and Savior, and hence should never die nor see corruption. After he had impressed these teachings upon the belief of his disciples, he assumed that this perfect Messiah and Savior must of necessity be God. And that he, Joseph C. Dylks, was the only and true

God—Creator and preserver of all things, and the finisher of man's salvation.

The time consumed in passing from one of these pretensions to another was short, as the zeal and infatuation of his followers made them ready to embrace and believe any thing he should affirm. Having taken the first step toward consummate blasphemy, they appeared anxious to reach it as soon as possible.

STABILITY OF THEIR BELIEF.

The firmness with which the followers of Dylks adhered to their faith is really surprising; for it is very doubtful, indeed, whether any one of them ever yielded up his belief in him as verily and truly God. Although death came and carried off one after another of the "believers," who, according to the faith, should never die, still those who remained were as unwavering in their belief as before. The church of the "old faith" was broken up, and could not be organized until new comers had accumulated in the neighborhood in sufficient numbers to begin anew—the Dylksites remaining by themselves, isolated and alone. And at this moment, there is not one person living who gave his adhesion to the "new faith," who is not as firm now as he was then in the "faith." Those even who were

little girls and boys then, but now men and women going down the declivity of life, are still looking for the reappearance of Dylks to establish the New Jerusalem and gather them within its walls.

THE RATTLESNAKE MAN.

The following incident illustrates how the children were corrupted by the "faith." It was communicated to me by an eye-witness of the facts related :

In the summer of 1850, a large man, about thirty-five years old, stopped for dinner at the hotel of Mr. Robert Mills, in Barnesville, Ohio. He was dressed in an uncolored homespun suit, cut after the plain style of the old Methodists, and wore his hair and beard long and disheveled. He had a fine horse, saddle and bridle, and on the valise pad was strapped a small flat box. Having dismounted, he carefully unstrapped the box, and carried it under his arm into the sitting-room of the hotel. When invited to dinner, he took the box with him, and put it on the floor by the side of his chair. After dinner he brought the box into the bar-room, and instantly inquired if any one wished to see a rattlesnake ; if so, he would show one for a dime apiece. A purse was soon made up. The stranger opened the box, and a large rattlesnake,

having eighteen rattles, emerged from it and coiled itself on the floor. It was lively, and rejoiced to see its master; it shook its rattles, threw open its mouth, and shot out its tongue. The snake was fangless. One of the spectators seeing this, inquired the cause.

“When I caught it, I took it up and knocked out the teeth with my jack-knife.”

“Were you not afraid to take hold of it?”

“No, for had it bit me, it would have done me no harm. I shall never die; I shall live three hundred and fifty years precisely from this year, and shall then be transferred into the New Jerusalem without seeing death.”

He then proceeded for over an hour to expatiate upon the claims of Dylks, saying that he had often seen him in the spirit—had frequent conversations with him; and he had been informed by Dylks that before the end of the present century, he should descend to earth and establish a kingdom of universal righteousness; but the building of the New Jerusalem would be deferred for three hundred and fifty years. The stranger gave his name as Moses Hartley; he resided in the mountains of what is now West Virginia. He lived in the Salesville settlement at the time Dylks made his advent, had seen and heard him preach. He had just been on

a visit to the *Temple*, "the only place," he said, "where true religion had ever been revealed to man."

RETURN OF REV. DAVIS.

About seven years after the exit of Dylks near Philadelphia, the Rev. Davis returned to the neighborhood of the *Temple*. In the interval, the United Brethren congregation, recovering from the shock of the delusion, had put up their new church at the village of Salesville. Davis, who was well dressed, and looked as if he had lived sumptuously during his absence, boldly asked the use of the church in which to deliver a religious discourse. His request was granted, and at night he addressed the large congregation that came out to hear him for two or three hours. He there declared that he had seen Dylks ascend to heaven, and that he would shortly return to earth to set up his kingdom; that Dylks was God, and that there was no true religion but that which recognized him as such. He denounced Christianity, saying: "It is only a hotchpotch of Judaism and heathenism." And that "the religion taught in the house in which I am preaching is as abominable as the car of Juggernaut or a temple for idols."

Davis left the next morning, and has never been heard of since.

DEATH OF THE APOSTLES.

Michael Brill died about two years after his return from Philadelphia, continuing to be until death a sincere believer in the pretensions of Dylks.

Mr. McCormick lived for many years after the disappearance of Dylks. Throughout life he dressed much as Dylks did at his advent, wearing his hair so long that it hung below his shoulders. He died a few years ago an unflinching Dylksite.

Of the career of Dylks after his separation from McCormick and Brill, near the city of Philadelphia, nothing is known. No reliance, of course, can be put in the stories of the Rev. Davis and Moses Hartley.

He came, performed his extraordinary part in the history of the Salesville church, set up his claim as the God of the universe, spread abroad his sacrilegious teachings, gathered about him many followers, established a discord in the church at Leatherwood *Temple*, which has not yet ceased, and then vanished. And this, in all probability, is all we shall ever know of him.

Outline of Contents.

THE LEATHERWOOD GOD, 7. Region where he appeared, 7. State of religion in the settlement, 9. Leatherwood Circuit, 11. Advent of the Leatherwood God, 12. His personal appearance, 14. Subsequent conduct, 15. Prominent converts, 18. Progress of the delusion, 20. The journey and adventures of Dylks and McCormick, 22. The effects, 27. The Temple seized, 28. A miracle that was not performed, 30. Rev. George Brill's account of proceedings, 31. A reverend convert, 34. Arrested by a mob, 35. Before 'Squire Frame, 38. In court again, 39. Reign of terror, 42. What the Dylksites were doing, 43. What had become of Dylks, 43. An escape, 44. Dylks reappears, 46. Fresh developments and an organization, 47. The journey to Philadelphia, 50. Dylks' successive claims, 52. Stability of their belief, 54. The rattlesnake man, 55. Death of the apostles, 57.

The Leatherwood God

AN ACCOUNT OF THE

APPEARANCE AND PRETENSIONS

OF

JOSEPH C. DYLLKS

In Eastern Ohio in 1828

BY

R. H. TANEYHILL

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